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The most noteworthy thing about the poem is its form, which is that of the *chansons de geste* (Alexandrines), although the poem in question is a *roman d'aventure*. There is, however, one important difference. In Old-French versification the verse of ten and twelve syllables admitted at the end of each hemistich an unaccented syllable which did not count. In modern French this has been restricted to the second hemistich alone. Hence the verse with feminine rhyme. When an unaccented syllable occurs at the end of the first hemistich it must be elided, that is, the following word must begin with a vowel. This modern usage has, until the publication of Brun de la Montaigne, not been traced farther back than the poet Jehan le Maire, who lived at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century. It is, however, found observed, with few exceptions, in the poem before us, which is more than a century older than the works of Jehan le Maire.*

The fourth and last volume for 1875 is in press, and will shortly be issued to subscribers. It is the *Débat des Hérauts de France et d'Angleterre*, followed by "The Debate between the Heraldes of Englande and Fraunce," compiled by John Coke.

In addition to the works above named the society also publishes a Bulletin, which contains, in addition to reports on the affairs of the society, notices of manuscripts relating to Old-French literature which are not of a character to publish *in extenso*. The Bulletin for the first year contains notices of three interesting manuscripts, one of which, *Bib. Nat.* 25, 415, *Fonds Fr.*, contains various works in Provençal of extreme value for the history of mediæval traditions.

The society, in short, is doing excellent work, and deserves the hearty support and recognition of scholars in this country.

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4. — *Life of Edwin Forrest, the American Tragedian*. By WILLIAM ROUNSEVILLE ALGER. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co. 1877. 2 vols. 8vo. pp. 431, 433.

MR. ALGER'S life of Edwin Forrest is confessedly a good deal more than a biography. Its plan, the author tells us in his Preface, "is that of a philosophical history," which adds to the narration of events a discussion of their causes and their teachings, and "intersperses the mere recital of personal facts and incidents with studies of the principal topics of a more general nature intimately associated with" them. Clearly,

* An interesting note on this subject by A. Mussafia will be found in the *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, I. p. 98.

the only limits to a book undertaken with this very decided breadth of purpose are to be found in the number of opinions the author may have to set forth on that considerable class of subjects with which human experience is concerned in one way or another ; and since in Mr. Alger's case this number is by no means small, it is not in the least surprising that his work expands into these two rather formidable volumes. The latitude which he so candidly bespeaks he uses to the full, in what is certainly a hazardous experiment upon the public patience ; but then he has one great point in his favor, — he is an enthusiast, and an enthusiast is seldom dull. His opinions are set forth with a combative energy that, if unnecessary, is at least exhilarating. If there is hardly a subject which could be supposed to be suggested by his leading topic that does not draw him into a digression ; if there is no passion, phase of life, or form of action or adventure, that does not call forth its little essay, it must be confessed that each of these is entertaining even when erratic, and very much in earnest even when its cause is the most trifling. The book, as a whole, is a most curious production, which will constantly amuse and sometimes possibly amaze the reader ; but it will seldom tire him, unless with overmuch of its author's favorite quality of "vigor."

The biographer's estimate of Forrest, whom he regards with a peculiar kind of hero-worship, is best indicated, perhaps, by a passage from his description of the "dominating class of men" to which he considers the actor to belong ; a passage which has the additional advantage of showing Mr. Alger's peculiarities of style running their wildest riot and executing their most startling feats. Of such a type of man, he says that "the dynamic charge in his nervous centres is so deep and intense that it produces a chronic exaltation above fear into complacency, and raises" him "toward the eternal ether, among the topmost heads of our race." Again, "there is in his nervous system, resulting from the free connection and uninterrupted interplay of all its parts, a centralized unity, a slowly swaying equilibrium, which fills him with the sense of a saturating drench of power. . . . His consciousness seems to float on his surcharged ganglia in an intoxicating dreaminess of balanced force, which . . . lifts him out of the category of common men."

"In his basic build" Forrest appears to Mr. Alger to have been a strongly marked specimen of the rare ruling class whose character is thus described ; and although "the circumstances of his life and the training of his mind were unfavorable to the full development of his power in the highest directions," yet he remains for his biographer a fairly heroic embodiment of great and balanced force. It is almost altogether in this aspect that the book considers him ; and Mr. Alger has

but little patience with those who fail to see in the stalwart actor's mighty muscles, gusty passions, and intense vitality, all the elements of a most "robust and towering specimen of impassioned manhood." There is a certain savage glee in his attacks upon such "weaklings" as have disagreed with him, and displayed their "ignorance of virile truth in querulous complaints" that Forrest's acting showed both "coarseness and ferocity." Throughout his narrative such misappreciators of his hero keep Mr. Alger constantly employed; he is continually on the watch for those Philistines that beset the path of genius with their feeble criticism; and where he finds one, does not fail to dash upon him with a force of fierce invective beside which Forrest's own might pale. He is not long content without some object of denunciation, and in the intervals often reminds us very strongly of a character in one of Leon Gozlan's novels, who, when conventionalities offended him, was wont to query fiercely, "*Mais quand pourrai-je manger un bourgeois?*"

It would, however, be an injustice both to Mr. Alger and his subject should this inevitable comment on the book's extravagances convey the impression that we have found it, as a whole, either absurd or valueless. It is by no means necessary that we should. In spite of Mr. Alger's somewhat riotous fancy, he has been in the main more faithful to his task than those who agree with him in his heroic conception of the actor's character might wish. The actual narrative, which forms the main portion of the book, though far too richly decorated with the arabesques of Mr. Alger's rhetoric, is at least not itself distorted; and either intentionally, or because of the writer's instinctive conscientiousness, is so easily separable by the reader from the comments made upon it, that one unconsciously clears away the verbiage as he reads, and rises from the book with a very fair idea of what Forrest really was. Sonorous phrase about his slowly swaying equilibrium and balanced consciousness floating upon his surcharged ganglia is, after all, of little consequence when we have here beside it the easily gathered facts of his history and character told with a truth which could have no better testimony than that they often run counter to the design of their narrator. We do not deny that they establish Forrest's claims to a place in the literature of biography as a typical character, — the embodiment of a certain force and vigor which there is a common tendency to identify with genius; but that the force was essentially of the earth earthy, and the vigor incapable of use in any very high direction, we are more than ever convinced by reading Mr. Alger's book.